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A Guide
for
Assigning
Responsibilities
to
Nursing Personnel

1963

MONTANA STATE BOARD OF NURSING
MONTANA NURSES ASSOCIATION

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INTRODUCTION

Because of the confusion that seems to exist as to the functions performed by personnel working within nursing service in hospitals, nursing homes and other health agencies, the Montana Nurses' Association and the Montana State Board of Nursing appointed a committee to clarify nursing roles. The following statement has been approved by the MNA and the State Board of Nursing.

It is the belief of these two groups that from time to time it will be necessary to make revisions in the statement as to the functions of the various categories of nursing personnel. It is hoped, however, that for the present the statement will be used as a guide by registered nurses and those employing nurses.

DEFINING POLICIES REGARDING NURSING FUNCTIONS

Any agency employing nursing personnel should have in written form clearly defined policies concerning the functions of each category of worker in the nursing department. These policies should be formulated by the registered nurse staff and approved by the governing authority of the agency. They should conform to the legal definitions of registered professional and licensed practical nurses in Montana, which are as follows:

REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL NURSE

- (1) "A person practices professional nursing who for compensation or personal gain, performs any professional nursing services requiring the application of principles of the biological, physical or social sciences and nursing skills in the care of the sick, in the prevention of disease or in the conservation of health."

LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSE

- (2) "A person practices practical nursing, who for compensation or personal gain cares for selected convalescent, sub-acute and chronically ill patients, and who assists the professional nurse in a team relationship, especially in the care of those more acutely ill. She provides nursing service in institutions, and in private homes where she is prepared to give household assistance when necessary. She may be employed by a pri-

vate individual, a hospital or a health agency. The practical nurse works under the direct supervision of a registered nurse where such supervision is possible and obtainable, and similarly under the direct supervision of a physician."

All nursing activities should be directed and supervised by registered nurses.

To identify the levels of functioning of various workers within the field of nursing, it is necessary to recognize that nursing is one of the many health professions which share in the care of individuals with health problems.

The physician makes the primary evaluation of the individual's health needs and makes the medical plan of care for the patient. Parts of the care may be delegated to other professions such as social workers, dietitians and special therapists, as well as nurses.

When the physician refers an individual to an agency he is delegating certain responsibilities to that agency. When this is done, any agency providing nursing services must be so organized that all of the nursing care to patients remains under the direct control of registered nurses.

In order to fulfill this nursing responsibility, it is necessary that registered nurses evaluate the nursing needs of each patient on a continuing basis and determine the nursing care to be provided, in accordance with stated policies and in recognition of the ability of the individual workers. Only the part of the care which can be safely and effectively performed by practical nurses and auxiliary nursing personnel should be delegated to them.

Although care is delegated, it remains the responsibility of the registered nurse to determine that the care is provided safely and effectively. She must supervise the care given by the practical nurse and auxiliary worker and be able to give assistance when needed.

All care which requires use of professional judgment based on knowledge of physical, biological and social sciences must be provided by the registered nurse.

In any patient care situation, R.N.'s, L.P.N.'s and nurse aides should perform only those acts for which each has been prepared and has demonstrated ability to perform, bearing in mind the individual's personal responsibility under the law.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF NURSING PERSONNEL

A staffing pattern and nursing policies should be established that will enable nursing service personnel to function as follows:

REGISTERED NURSE

1. Assesses patient's needs.

Example: makes an evaluation of physical, spiritual, emotional, social and economic needs, habits and resources of the patient.

2. Designs the plan of nursing care.

Example: plans in cooperation with others the kind and amount of nursing care required in meeting the individual patients needs, including rehabilitation measures and instructing the patient and his family.

3. Assigns responsibility for nursing care given by others.

Example: provides for maximum utilization of skills and abilities of personnel; interprets the needs of the patient to all personnel participating in providing patient services.

4. Gives direct nursing care to patients when judged advisable.

Example: gives nursing care to patients whose condition has not been stabilized; performs any nursing activity which is rare or occasional, regardless of complexity.

5. Supervises care given.

Example: continuing evaluation of the performance of the other categories of workers and an awareness of the activity of these workers.

LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSE

Under direction, the licensed practical nurse:

1. Maintains an attractive and comfortable environment for the patient.

Example: regulation of room temperature, lighting, maintenance of needed supplies, reporting of need for repairs and equipment.

2. Gives care and assistance to selected patients in respect to their personal hygiene, grooming, comfort, rest, nourishment.

Examples: assistance to patients as required in bathing, toileting, turning, walking, feeding.

3. Performs selected procedures in those circumstances where a professional degree of evaluative judgment is not required.

Examples: preparation and care of patients receiving specialized treatments administered by physician or professional nurse;

preparation and after care of equipment for treatments administered by the physician or other professional worker, including necessary sterilization of equipment;

application of simple dressings, irrigation of functioning and regulated colostomies and catheters, enemas and other standardized procedures which are commonly carried out, such as temperature, pulse and respiration, blood pressures.

NOTE: does not include the dressing of large open wounds; the insertion of a tube into the stomach through the nose or throat; intravenous injections, insertion of nasal catheters to administer oxygen; irrigation of a new colostomy; manipulation of underwater drainage.

4. Administers selected medicines including the preparation, administration and recording.

Examples: cathartics, aspirin, vitamins, insulin, sedatives.

NOTE: does not include the giving of medications which must be prepared by calculation of fractional dosage, or by converting to or from apothecary and metric system.

5. Observes, records, and reports to the appropriate person discernible symptoms, reactions and changes in condition of the patient.

Examples: bleeding, change in amount or color of drainage; changes in temperature, respiration, blood pressure, color of skin, evidence of marked restlessness or anxiety.

6. Gives first aid measures in an emergency situation and reports condition promptly to the registered professional nurse or physician.

Examples: treats in accordance with American Red Cross standardized procedures, conditions of shock, respiratory failure, fainting, hemorrhage.

NURSE AIDES

The term "nurse aide" or "auxiliary worker in nursing" designates the personnel employed in hospitals, nursing homes and other agencies to assist registered nurses and licensed practical nurses. These workers are employed and trained on-the-job to perform tasks which involve specific services for patients as delegated by the registered nurse. They carry out tasks which are supportive and complementary to nursing practice and, while the performance of these tasks is essential to patient care, their activities do not constitute the practice of nursing.

The list of tasks presented below, to be performed by nurse aides under the direction of a registered nurse or licensed practical nurse and as delegated by the registered nurse describes the most common tasks assigned these workers.

- 1. Answer patients' signals, providing necessary assistance in conformance with delegated tasks and notifying the appropriate nurse when the situation so indicates.**
- 2. Assist with the admission, transfer and discharge of patients.**
- 3. Assist with the dressing and undressing of patients.**
- 4. Assist with the patients' baths.**
- 5. Assist with the measuring of fluid intake and output of patients and the recording on appropriate forms.**
- 6. Assist with the feeding of patients.**
- 7. Assist with the collection of urine, stool, and sputum specimens.**
- 8. Assist with the weighing of patients.**
- 9. Assist with the making of patients' beds.**
- 10. Assist with the application and removal of such protective devices as side rails, footboards, bed cradles.**